



Starting Points *for* **Grandparents** **Raising Grandchildren**

**A Resource Guide with Information and
Services for Grandparent Caregivers**



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A Message from Director Charles D. Johnson

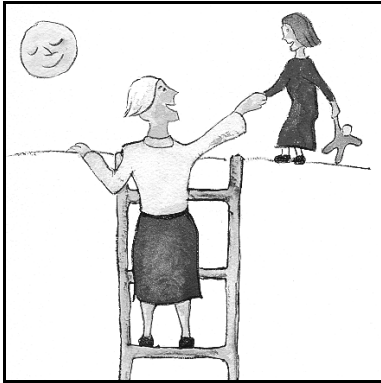
Each year, more and more grandparents from all areas, socio-economic and ethnic groups are becoming primary caregivers for their grandchildren. According to the most recent U.S. Census, there are 213,465 children under the age of 18 living in grandparent-headed households in Illinois alone.

I'm proud that the Illinois Department on Aging recognized early on the need to reach out to these grandparents. Of course, their needs vary. Some need legal assistance while others may benefit by counseling services or information about day care. All have one thing in common, though; they seek to provide a loving, safe and stable environment for their grandchildren.

The Department helps grandparents with their challenges by establishing support groups throughout the state, leading them to resources and information, and advocating for them. This guide, now in its third printing, has proven to be a good place for many grandparents to start, and summarizes many of the support systems available to them.

The Illinois Department on Aging is grateful to grandparents who are working so hard to give their grandchildren a solid foundation from which to grow, and we are eager to help in any way we can.

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Purpose of this Guide

Attempting to find services and resources can be a long, frustrating process even for those who work in or are familiar with the social service delivery system. For the majority of people the task of finding help can sometimes seem overwhelming. Sometimes determining where to begin can be the most difficult and time-consuming task of all.

The purpose of this resource guide is to give

grandparents raising grandchildren a quick overview of services, programs, and general “starting points” to get needed assistance. The guide also provides tips and general information that grandparents may want to consider as they courageously take on the responsibility of raising their grandchildren.

Note: This guide is by no means an exhaustive

listing of all agencies and services available to grandparents raising grandchildren. We attempted to list resources and services that are statewide and that serve as clearinghouses for further referrals— starting points. If you know of valuable services that are statewide and benefit grandparents raising grandchildren, please let us know.

How to Use this Guide

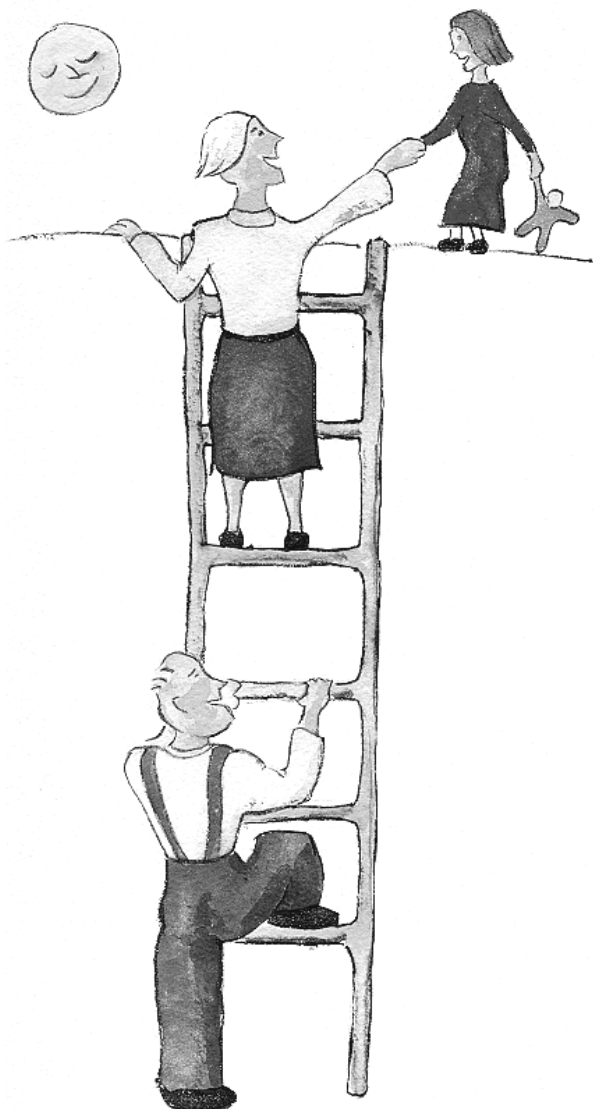
This guide has been divided into sections. The guide begins with emotional ups and downs that are often common experiences associated with being a grandparent caregiver. In the first section you will find general information on developmental, health and safety needs. The second section provides information on child care, school and educational needs. The third section offers information on challenges facing today’s children. The fourth section contains information on obtaining needed documents, as well as general assistance regarding financial assistance, food, medical care, custody, and legal issues. The last section of this guide offers suggestions for coping, including information on support groups. For ease and readability, we have used the following symbols throughout the guide:



*for phone
numbers
to call
for help*



*for ideas,
tips and
information*



Emotional Ups...

Faith that your grandchildren's lives will be stable and sound

Satisfaction in knowing you are making a better life for your grandchildren

Comfort in knowing your grandchildren are safe with you

Gratification in knowing you are making a difference in your grandchildren's lives

Patience to cope with yourself and your grandchildren

Courage to take on the responsibility of parenting (and it is a big responsibility)

Inspiration that comes from hearing your grandchildren say, "I love you"

Gain in personal satisfaction knowing you are strong enough for this task

Sense of Order when things go right

Happiness that you made it through another day

Pride in yourself and your grandchildren for persevering through tough times

Compassion in your relationships with your grandchildren, their friends and others

Hope that the situation will get better

and Downs that You May Encounter:

Denial of the current situation—
unrealistic expectations that the
parents will become responsible

Fear of how you will be able to
financially and emotionally care for
your grandchildren

Guilt thinking you should have or
could have done things differently
with your own child

Anger at your child for abandoning or
not being a responsible parent

Sacrifice in order to keep your
family together

Loss of the grandparent-grandchild
relationship, as well as peer contacts

Frustration when things don't go as
planned

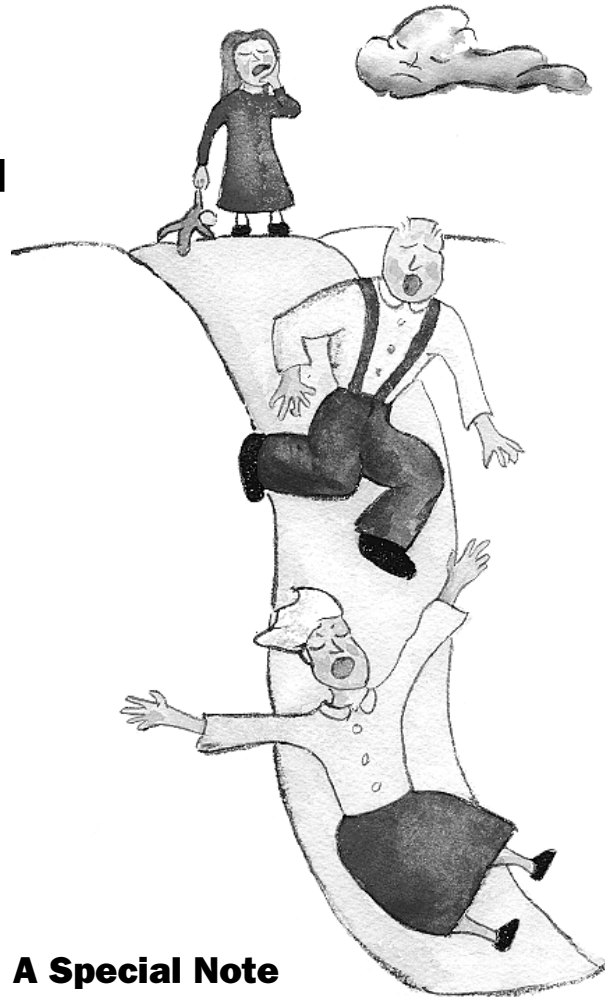
Sadness at the loss of a child and of
the typical grandparent role

Disappointment in not being able
to do the things you wanted at this
stage in your life

Confusion in understanding the
issues facing today's children

Embarrassment at having to ask
for assistance for raising your "new
family," and asking yourself, "How
could my child do this to me?"

Isolation from your friends and
"child-free" social networks



A Special Note to Grandparents:

Do any of these emotions sound familiar? If so, you are not alone. Grandparents raising their grandchildren experience all kinds of emotional ups and downs. The emotions listed above represent the feelings of grandparents who are confronted with the challenge of raising their children's children. Parenting is a difficult, emotional job even in the best of situations. Remember to take a moment now and then to commend yourself for what you are doing—making a difference in your grandchild's life by giving her or him the chance to be a safe, loved and nurtured child.



Child Development, Health & Safety Needs

Wanda never thought much about when children should begin doing key developmental tasks, such as pulling themselves up, crawling, walking and talking. After all, she had made the decision not to have children of her own. Her husband, Jim, had children from a previous marriage and suffered from medical problems. Now, at 40 years of age, Wanda cares for Jim and raises her stepchild's 2-year-old child.

Wanda's situation is not unusual. Many grandparents raising their grandchildren are concerned that they lack

the knowledge and ability it takes to raise a child. Some grandparents (and relative caregivers) may be

parenting for the first time in their lives. Others may have been away from the role of parent for so long that they do not remember or simply do not know the latest "ins and outs" of parenting today. And, things change—new technologies, ideas and practices affect the ways we raise and care for our children.

Child Development

- Children are unique individuals. They think, look, act and grow in different ways. This is part of what makes them so special. The Ages and Expectations chart (next page) has been developed to give examples of what you might expect at certain ages. Talk to your medical professional about your grandchild's development.

- Children may have been exposed to emotional or physical traumas, or prenatal conditions that could make their development and behavioral patterns different from other children their own age.



Ages	Expectations
1	<i>plays games like patty cake and peek-a-boo, sits up without support, pulls into a standing position, feeds self finger foods, knows own name and repeats sounds</i>
2	<i>makes 2-word sentences, walks alone, eats with a spoon, names toys and people, recognizes self in mirror, can point and name ears, eyes, nose</i>
3	<i>toilet training, plays simple games, counts out loud on fingers, rides a tricycle</i>
4	<i>begins thinking in an organized manner, knows about 1,000 words</i>
5	<i>plays logically, able to perform activities in sequential order</i>
6	<i>able to learn and recognize differences between right and wrong</i>
7	<i>able to concentrate well on tasks at hand, often self-absorbed to the point of appearing withdrawn, shows sensitivity to others</i>
8	<i>curious about all things they are learning - including sexuality, high energy, and often act impulsively</i>
9	<i>acts with independence, likes to learn facts, rules and standards, takes on more responsibility and engages in chores around the house</i>

Sources: *Grandparents Guide: Helping to raise your children's children*, Phoenix, AZ.
Second Time Around. Kalamazoo, MI.



For more information on child development, health and medical needs for children, call the **Illinois Department of Public Health** at **1-800-323-4769**.

Special Needs and At Risk Children

Ray's heart felt heavy as he waited for the assessment report on his grandson. Nathan was only 6 years old and had already lived a tough life. His mother was in jail, and his father was no where to be found. Ray had hoped the boy would "settle down" by the time he started school. When this didn't happen, he knew he needed professional help with Nathan.

Children with special needs include those with physical or mental disabilities, emotional or

behavioral problems, or considered at-risk for developing disabilities.

Children who had prenatal

exposure to drugs and alcohol are considered at-risk. Prenatal (and often environmental) exposure to harmful substances and behaviors can result in the child being deprived of certain age-appropriate development steps.

If you are concerned about your grandchild's

development or are raising a child who has a disability, there are programs that can help you. Also, schools are a valuable resource for children with special needs. Children who have disabilities are mainstreamed into most classrooms. Ask about available programs at your grandchild's school.

Early Intervention Services

Early intervention is for families with infants or toddlers ages birth through 3 years old who have concerns about how their child is developing. If you are concerned about grandchild's walking, talking, crawling, understanding, seeing or hearing, you will want to find out more about early intervention assessment and services.



For more information on statewide early intervention services, contact **Child & Family Connections** at **888-217-3505**.

Helpful Resources for General Information on Raising Grandchildren Include:

Doctors. Contact your grandchild's pediatrician or clinic to locate other valuable resources and referrals.

Hospitals. Many hospitals sponsor



programs and activities regarding child development and child rearing. Call your local hospitals to find out if they offer such programs, and if so, request to be put on

their mailing list.

Libraries. Libraries are a great source for parenting books and materials. There are many good books, video tapes and guides that can help answer your questions.

Parent Help Line: The Parent Help Line is a free confidential phone support service in Illinois that helps parents and caregivers of children identify problems and work together for possible solutions. Open 365 days a year, the Help Line's volunteers talk with more than one hundred parents a month, sharing crucial parenting and referral information.



For more information about their services, including free monthly newsletter and a weekly television program, call the **Parent Help Line** toll free at **888-727-5889**.

Immunizations

Your grandchild not only needs immunization so that she or he is protected from disease, but also because it is required by schools and many day care centers for enrollment.

Immunization Schedule		
Age	Immunizations Needed	Provider/Date
<i>Newborn</i>	<i>Hepatitis B</i>	
<i>2 months old</i>	<i>DPT, HIB, IPV</i>	
<i>4 months old</i>	<i>DPT, HIB, IPV</i>	
<i>6 months old</i>	<i>DPT, HIB, IPV, Hepatitis B</i>	
<i>15 months old</i>	<i>MMR and HIB</i>	
<i>18 months old</i>	<i>DPT</i>	
<i>4-6 year</i>	<i>DPT, IPV</i>	
<i>5-18 years</i>	<i>MMR</i>	
<i>Every 10 years</i>	<i>Adult tetanus, Diphtheria</i>	



For information on immunizations and programs in your area that offer free or low-cost immunizations, call the **Department of Public Health** at **1-800-323-4769**.

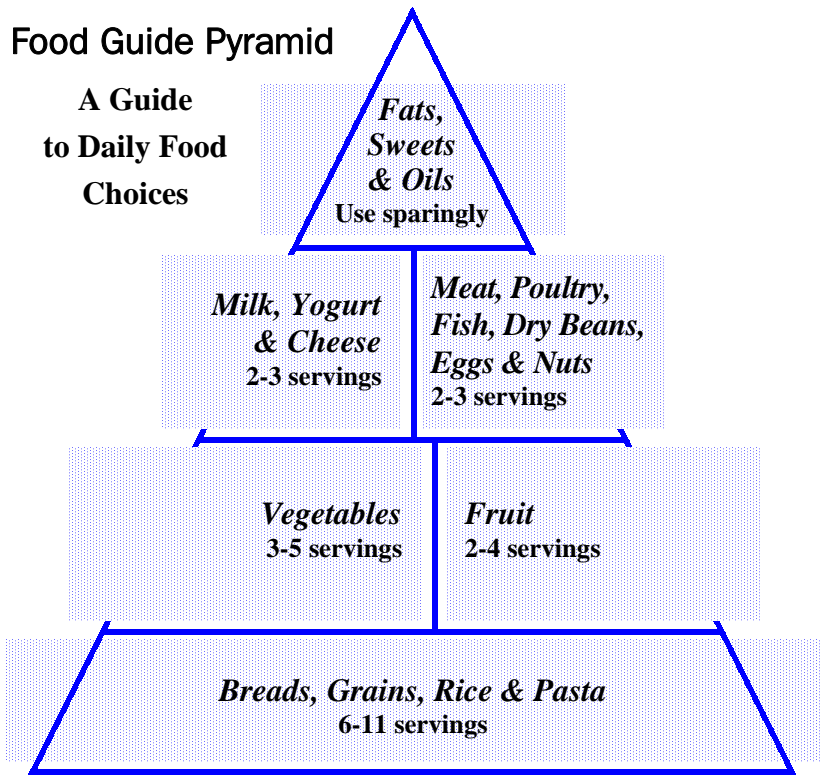
Healthy Eating Habits

Children learn from adults. If you practice good, healthy eating habits—chances are your grandchildren will too. The food guide pyramid can be used to ensure that your grandchildren are eating a variety of foods and getting an adequate supply of vitamins and nutrients for growth and health.

Remember: Quality rather than quantity of food is the important factor for meeting your grandchildren's nutritional needs.

Food Guide Pyramid

**A Guide
to Daily Food
Choices**



Tips for Healthy Eating

- ❶ Establish a consistent eating routine.
- ❷ Keep healthy snacks handy for your grandchild.
- ❸ Avoid eating too much junk food and sweets.
- ❹ Avoid foods high in fat and cholesterol.
- ❺ Read food labels carefully.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants & Children (WIC)

- Provides nutrition education, counseling and food vouchers to mothers, babies and children who qualify.

- **Grandparent caregivers can apply for this service for their grandchildren.**

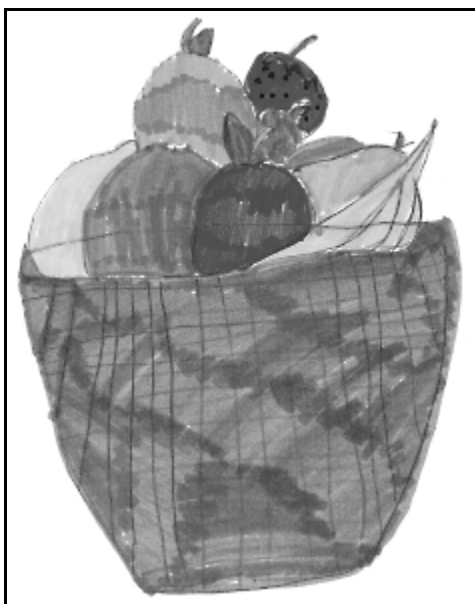
- Program participation is based on income, child's age and medical or health risk.

Are you eligible for WIC? There are three factors that must be met:

1. **Category** - A pregnant woman; breast-feeding (up to one year after giving birth), a new mother (up to six months after giving birth); or a parent, **guardian** or caretaker who has an infant or child younger than 5 years of age.
2. **Income** - Your annual household income must be within WIC guidelines (you may have a job and still meet these guidelines)
3. **Medical or Health Risk** - A screening by the WIC clinic must find that you have a medical or diet health risk like low iron, low weight gain or need to improve your diet.



For information on WIC services and the nearest agency, contact the **Illinois Department of Public Health** at **1-800-323-4769**.



Food Stamps

- Provide qualifying families with assistance in purchasing food.
- Food stamps are issued monthly via an I-LINK card and can be used at most grocery stores.



For guidelines, eligibility, information and where to apply for the Food Stamp Program, contact the **Illinois**

Department of Human Services at **1-800-252-8635**.

Emergency Food Assistance



There is a variety of emergency food assistance services located throughout the State. If you are in need of food, contact the **Illinois Hunger Coalition**, at **1-800-359-2163**, for the nearest food assistance location.

Other helpful resources for obtaining information regarding food, special diets and eating healthy include: your local county extension service offices, hospitals, schools and local health departments.

Dental Needs

Your grandchildren's teeth are important. They help children stay healthy by allowing them to chew foods properly. In the past, dental extraction was a common cure for dental problems. Now there are treatments that make pulling teeth almost an obsolete practice. Talk to your dentist to establish a healthy plan for keeping your grandchild's teeth healthy and strong.

Here Are Some Tips on Keeping Your Grandchildren's Teeth Healthy:

(Sources: American Association of Pediatric Dentistry, National Institute of Dental Research)

• Did you know that even infants need



dental care?

Good dental care begins before

you see the first tooth in your grandchild's mouth. Infants need to have their gums wiped with a soft, damp cloth or gauze pad after each feeding. **Do not put babies to bed with a bottle at night or at nap time.** Milk, formula and other sweet drinks contain sugar. Sucking on a bottle

filled with liquids with sugar in them can cause tooth decay.

• **Teething.** Children begin to "cut" their first tooth between the ages of 4-10 months. Teething may cause excess drooling, crying, fussiness and an unhappy baby. Be alert to the fact that children who are teething may be tempted to put things into their mouth to soothe themselves. Always pay close attention to what your grandchild puts in her or his mouth. By age 2 - 2 ½ years about 10 teeth in each jaw will be visible.



For information on dental services for children, call the **Illinois Department of Public Health** at **1-800-323-4769**. IDPH may be able to direct you to dental services in your area (whether you are using Medicaid, or just seeking low-cost services).

Insurance/Medical Coverage

Betty already worried about her own medical bills. After all, Medicare only covers so much. She knew she couldn't afford private insurance for her two grandchildren living with her. A grandparent in a similar situation told her that Medicaid was often available to children. Betty was embarrassed at the thought of applying for assistance, but there wasn't anything else she could do—the children needed medical care.

Private Insurance.

Many grandparents have difficulty obtaining health insurance for their grandchildren. Grandparents who are retired are often on Medicare, an insurance program that covers older persons. Grandparents who are still working may find it difficult (if not impossible) to add grandchildren to their employer-based policy. As a result, many grandparents seek Medicaid coverage for their grandchildren. If you have employer-based health insurance, ask about dependent coverage for grandchildren in your custody.

Medicaid pays for

hospital and medical care for persons who qualify financially, the aged, blind or disabled. In many cases, grandchildren being raised by grandparents do qualify for Medicaid.



You do not need to be receiving public assistance for your grandchildren to receive Medicaid under a Child Only Grant. Your grandchildren are automatically eligible for Medicaid if:

- your grandchildren are receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or
- your grandchildren

are eligible for TANF cash assistance, but you apply only for Medicaid, or

- your grandchildren qualify under State's rule of "medically needy children."

To apply for Medicaid for your grandchildren you will need to prove that you are the primary caregiver. You will also need to show that your grandchildren are deprived of parental care, proof of your grandchildren's ages, relationship to you, and current living arrangement. **You do not need to have legal custody of your grandchildren for them to receive Medicaid.**

Medical providers are **NOT** required to accept Medicaid as a payment source. Call the doctor's office or clinic and verify Medicaid participation prior to your appointment.



For information and eligibility requirements on Medicaid, call the **Illinois Department of Human Services**. To find the department closest to you, call **1-800-252-8635**, TTY **1-800-526-5812**.



For information and referrals about health care coverage, WIC services, medical providers, immunization sites, children with special health care needs and other services for families and children, call the **Illinois Department of Public Health** at **1-800-323-4769**.

Safety

The social worker told Bill and Janet that the children would be at the police station downtown. Getting ready for the trip, Janet looked around her house. It was by no means child-proof. What she had considered “comfortable clutter” now just looked like safety risks.



Keeping your grandchildren safe may seem like a full-time

job, and at times it will be. However, by establishing good safety practices for you and your grandchildren, you are not only setting a good example, but will also help protect your grandchildren from potential dangers and accidents.

Consider the following safety tips:

Car Safety

- Use proper safety belt restraints at all times in a moving vehicle.
- Make sure infants and young children are in “approved” child safety seat in cars.
- Never leave young children alone in cars.
- Children under 12-years-old should never ride in the front seat.

Home Safety

- Keep small objects such as needles, pins, coins, beads, etc. away from small children. These objects can be deadly if swallowed.
- Make sure cribs have a snug fitting mattress and narrowly spaced slats. Keep all cords and strings, including blinds and curtain cords, away from cribs.

Home Safety

(continued)

- Never let children play with plastic bags.

- Never allow children to fall asleep with bottles in mouths.

- Help prevent poisoning by keeping all cleaning supplies, chemicals, medicines and cosmetics out of reach or in child-proof cabinets.

- Install smoke detectors and check batteries twice a year.

- Hold a mock fire drill with your grandchildren—plan escape routes and arrange for a safe meeting place outside in case of fire.

- Never leave small children alone in or near water - including bathtubs and pools.

Personal Safety

Teach your grandchildren the following personal safety tips:

- To memorize their full name, address and phone number, including area code, state and zip code.

- How to use the telephone, how to make calls to the operator and how to dial emergency numbers.

- To know that a stranger is someone they and you do not know well.

- To never enter a stranger's car or home.

- To keep the doors locked and only admit authorized people to their home.

- How to use a code word. A code word is a special word that only you and your children know. It is used if you need to have another person pick up your children so that he/she can verify that the person is safe.

- They are safer playing and walking with friends.

- To avoid alleys as well as poorly lit, lonely or deserted areas.

- Never to wander away from you or your yard unless they tell you and receive permission.

- To tell you if something strange or uncomfortable has happened to them.

- Never to give information about themselves (including home phone) to anyone except authorized persons.



For more information on child safety issues, call **your local Fire and Police Departments**. Other places to obtain information on child safety issues include: **schools, hospitals, libraries, and American Red Cross offices or the Illinois Department of Public Health, Safe Kids Program at 1-800-323-4769.**



Child Care, Schools & Educational Needs

Child Care

Finding child care is a concern for parents and caregivers. One of the first steps to finding the child care option that is right for your family is knowing the various types of child care.

The different types of child care include:

- **In-home care** — child care provider provides care in your home.

- **Family child care** — care provided in a caregiver's home. Family child care may or may not be licensed depending on the number of children under the caregiver's care.

- **Child care centers** — care provided outside of the caregiver's

home. Most child care centers are required by law to be licensed; however, there are certain types that do not require a license.

Finding the Right Type of Care

There are many pros and cons to the different types of child care. You may find it helpful to make a list of your child care needs (i.e., hours open, individualized attention, trained workers, planned activities) to help you decide which is best for your family. Talking to other parents, grandparents and co-workers is an excellent way to learn about child care options. Ask them if they are aware of the place you are considering. One grandparent offers the following advice to those

seeking child care:

ASK, ASK, ASK!

Employer Supports and Tax Credits

If you are working, your employer may have a program to help you with your child care needs. Contact your employer's human resources department about participation in child care programs. You may also be eligible for earned income credit (EIC) on your income taxes depending on your annual income and number and age of the children you support. For more information on the **Earned Income Credit program**, please see page 31 of this guide.



You may also want to consider contacting places such as the ones listed below in your area. While not all the places you contact can assist, they may be able to refer you to places that can.

Schools	Civic Clubs	Social Organizations
Churches	Health Clinics	Parent Training Centers
Hospitals	YMCA and YWCA	Parks and Recreation Department

Getting Financial Help with Child Care

Subsidized Child Care

The following information was obtained from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services:

- The State may be able to help with your child care costs if you work, are in a training or education program, or have other special needs for child care. All families must qualify for subsidized child care based on family size and income.
- Qualified parents may choose either centers or home networks already funded by the state, or they may choose their own providers.

- You are required to pay a portion of the fee based on your family's income and other factors. The portion you pay is set according to state guidelines, and you pay only that amount directly to the child care provider.

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your income taxes depending on your annual income and number and age of the children you support. For more information on the **Earned Income Credit program**, please see page 31 of this guide.

Taxes

Need help with your tax preparation? The Center for Law and Human Services can help. Individuals with incomes under \$15,000 and families with incomes under \$31,500.00 are eligible.



Call **1-888-827-8511** for information on a volunteer tax preparation location in your area.



For current eligibility guidelines, or if you think you may qualify for subsidized child care, contact the **Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R)** service in your county. To find the CCR&R office in your county, contact the **Department of Human Services** at **1-800-843-6154**, TTY **1-800-447-6404**.

Headstart

Head Start programs in Illinois generally provide free half-day school-year care for eligible low-income children, three to five years

of age. Some programs also provide full-day, year-round care. Pre-kindergarten programs, sponsored by many public school districts in Illinois,

also offer half-day, school-year care at no cost to three to five year-olds who meet eligibility guidelines set by each local district. **Call your local school district office**

School and Educational Needs

To Enroll your Grandchildren in School You Will Need:

- Birth Certificate (if starting kindergarten)
- Immunization Records
- School Records (if attended another school)
- Proof of Residency

Enrollment Procedures

1 Call the school district office (listed in phone book) in your area to obtain the name and address of where your grandchildren will be attending school. The District office will refer you to the school you need to go for registration.

2 When you register your grandchildren in school, you will need the children's birth certificate (if

starting kindergarten), and immunization records; if your grandchildren have been enrolled in another school, the previous school records will be needed. Schools have forms for requesting school records and immunizations. They can help you fill out necessary forms and obtain documents. If the children have attended school previously, that school will have school records and

immunization records. You may be asked to prove that your grandchildren live with you. Often this can be done by a letter from a landlord, clergy, or doctor. Ask the school what type of documentation is required. In most cases, guardianship is not a statutory requirement for enrolling a child in school.



If you have difficulty enrolling your grandchild in school call the **Illinois Department on Aging's Senior HelpLine** at

Interactions with Schools, Teachers, Counselors and Staff

Sylvia kept postponing the visit with her granddaughter's fifth grade teacher. How could she tell the teacher that the reason she is not involved in Marty's homework is because she does not understand it? Sylvia was not only intimidated by the school work, but she also feared embarrassing her granddaughter at school.

- **Get to know your grandchildren's teachers.** Inform teachers that you are raising your grandchildren. Teachers will want to send things home to "grandma" instead of "mom." Let the teacher know you want to be informed of your grandchild's progress.

Keep the lines of communication open between you, your grandchildren and the school.

- **Attend open houses and meetings.** Try to attend all parent-teacher conferences. Schedule personal meetings with teachers and counselors to talk about your

grandchildren. If you cannot make face-to-face contact, arrange for a telephone conference.

- **Get help with homework if needed.** Teachers may be able to get your grandchildren extra help with homework or tutoring. This may take place at the school or in the community. Let them know

if you are having trouble finding time or simply do not understand the homework well enough to help your grandchildren.

- **Do not be embarrassed or ashamed** if you do not understand your grandchildren's homework. Many adults have trouble with reading, writing, math, computer work, and other subjects. **Remember: It is in the best interest of your grandchildren to ask for help.**



● **Talk with the school counselors and nurses.** Counselors often have advice and resources for grandparents on social service programs in the community. This includes programs for behavioral and learning problems and other special needs. Contact the school nurse for information and resources on health and nutrition needs. Nurses and counselors can often provide information on talking with your grandchildren about difficult topics such as sexuality, drug and alcohol abuse, gangs and peer pressure.

SPECIAL NEEDS
Caregivers can request a case study and testing to identify deficits as well as request a multi-disciplinary study assessment. Caregivers have the right to request an evaluation or re-evaluation at any time.

● **Sex education and other sensitive issues.** Children are growing up very fast these days. As a result, schools are attempting to keep pace. Some schools do this by talking about important and serious issues in the classroom. For example, many classes integrate human sexuality and intimate relationship information into coursework. Your grandchildren may also learn about things such as: AIDS and HIV, teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, child and juvenile violence, gangs, domestic violence, substance abuse, and other social problems. Talk with your grandchildren's school about these subjects. You may want to plan special discussions with your grandchildren to see how they feel and react to these subjects.

Other School Programs that May Be Available to You:

● **Before and after school care.** Many schools have programs that offer before and after school child care. Most of these programs are for working parents and caregivers. Talk to the school about these programs.

● **School lunch programs.** Public schools have free and reduced lunch plans for children who qualify. When you enroll your grandchildren in school, ask about eligibility and guidelines for registration in the lunch program.



Challenges Facing Today's Children

As you know, things are different today. Children learn about drugs, alcohol, sex, gangs and violence at very early ages. Your grandchild's history might include some of these behaviors. As a result, he or she may not know what is right and wrong.

Many grandparents are raising children who are

developmentally deprived, but socially advanced. For example, a child may have trouble reading on a third grade level but has the survival instincts or "street-smarts" of an older teenager. The events that led up to your grandchildren being placed in your home may warrant a special approach in

parenting.

Talk to a counselor or family therapist; check with your grandchildren's school for additional information and referrals on getting help with parenting.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Young people are being exposed to alcohol, tobacco and drugs early—even in elementary school. The younger someone starts to use alcohol and drugs, the more likely she or he is to develop problems associated with such use.

Consider the following facts and information from the

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

- Young people who use alcohol and drugs also are more likely to be victims or perpetrators of violence, engage in unplanned and unprotected sex, experience school failure, or be seriously injured from driving or

engaging in other risky behavior while impaired.

- Easy access and availability of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs make it difficult to keep young people out of harm's way.

- Young people who use tobacco are more likely than others to drink heavily later

in life or use illicit drugs.

- Over the past two to three years the annual use of marijuana doubled among 8th graders; grew by two-thirds among 10th graders, and increased by two-fifths among 12th graders.

- Fewer young people see harm in using drugs.

- Understanding the danger associated with drug use is one of the greatest deterrents to drug use by youth.

- Young people report that getting alcohol, tobacco, and most illicit drugs is very easy.

Five Reasons Young People Give for Using Alcohol, Tobacco, and Illicit Drugs

- ❶ To Feel Grownup
- ❷ To Satisfy Curiosity
- ❸ To Fit In and Belong
- ❹ To Relax and Feel Good
- ❺ To Take Risks and Rebel



For more information about drug/alcohol abuse and prevention, call the **Department of Human Services** at **1-800-252-8951**.

Gangs

Criminal gang activity is a growing problem in our society. Steve Nawojczyk, a leading national expert on gangs and gang-related dynamics, offers the following information on gangs:

- It is not illegal to be in a gang, and indeed many adults are currently involved in activities that meet Webster's definition for a gang. However, when gangs engage in activities that break the law, their actions are illegal.

- Gangs may be part of a larger city or national gang, or

they may remain local.

- Joining a group that has a reputation, good or bad, gives a kid looking for a purpose something in which to be involved.

Participants have said the mere interaction of members, listening to one another's problems and sharing the ups and downs kids face are often what entices them to join a gang.

- Once in a gang, kids may find quitting the gang difficult and, in some cases, dangerous.

Reasons for Joining a Gang:

- Identity
- Discipline
- Recognition
- Love
- Belonging
- Money



Most police departments have juvenile gang specialists. For more information on gang prevention and intervention, contact your **local police department or the Child Advocacy Center of Illinois at 1-217-528-2224**.

Sexuality and Kids

You may have difficulty talking to your grandchildren about sexuality. Most parents do. However, kids learn about sexuality early in their lives. They may get information at school, from their friends or through television or music. It is important that they get

correct information from you.

Some tips to help you talk to your grandchildren about sexuality include:

1. Find out what your grandchildren's questions and concerns are.
2. Make sure you know the facts about sexually

transmitted diseases, AIDS, birth control, and pregnancy.

3. Talk about the things you see on TV or in the community that deal with sexuality. Ask your grandchildren how they feel about certain topics.



For information on talking to your grandchildren about sexuality issues, contact local community centers, health and family planning clinics, the **local Parent Teacher Association (PTA)** or people at **your grandchildren's school.**

Child Abuse

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services states, "child abuse is the mistreatment of a child... by a parent, caretaker, someone living in his or her home or someone who works with or around children."

Child abuse can be physical (such as burns or broken bones), sexual (such as fondling or incest), or emotional (verbal assaults, threats of abuse, harassment

or intimidation). Neglect happens when a parent or responsible caretaker fail to provide adequate

supervision, food, clothing, shelter or other basic needs for a child.

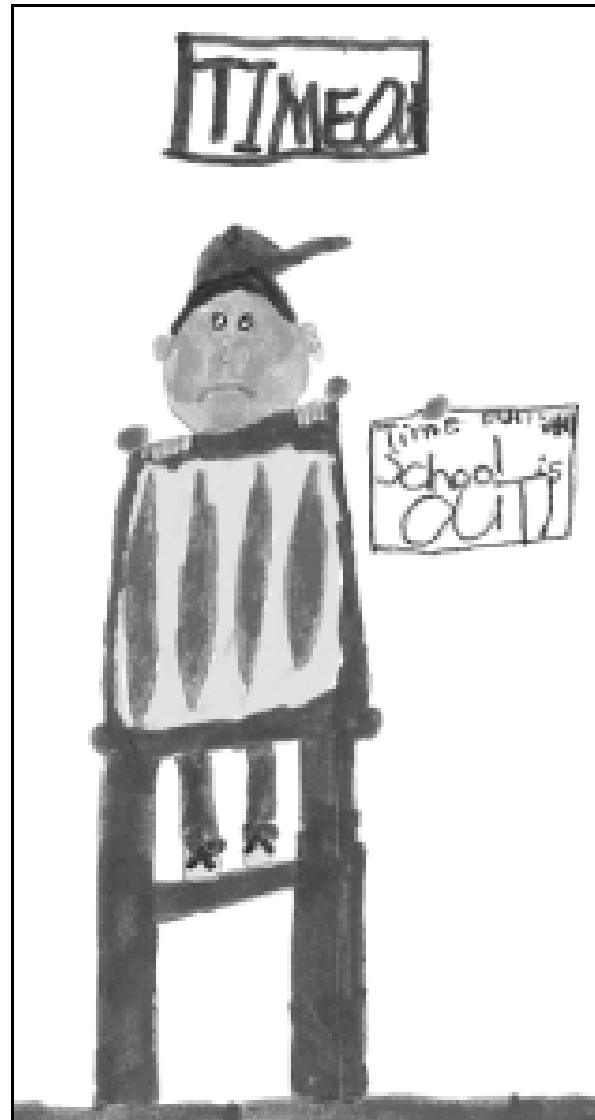


To report child abuse or neglect, call the **Child Abuse Hotline** at **1-800-252-2873**. The **Kids Peace Hotline, 1-800-334-4543**, is available 24 hours a day and provides information for parents involved in child abuse, and referrals to self help groups in your area. If your grandchild is a ward of the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services and you have concerns about case management call the **Illinois Department of Child and Family Services Advocacy** office at **1-217-524-2029**.

Communication Tips for Grandparents and Grandchildren

Good communication creates a win-win situation for both grandchildren and grandparents. Learning good communication skills helps children (and adults) develop confidence, feelings of self-worth, and good relationships with others.

- Teach your grandchildren good listening skills.
- Practice listening and talking skills. Speak with your grandchildren about school, friends, and how they feel about things.
- Respect your grandchildren. If you talk to your grandchildren as you do your peers, they will be more likely to tell you when things are right and/or wrong in their life.
- Praise your grandchildren for doing things correctly. Praise builds a child's confidence and reinforces communication. Unkind words lower their confidence and self-esteem.
- Children are never too old to be told they are loved. Saying and hearing "I love you" is important at any age.
- Give your undivided attention when your grandchildren want to talk to you. Don't read, watch TV, fall asleep or make yourself busy with other tasks.
- Set routines for bedtime, meals and chores. Routines will help your grandchildren feel safe. Inform them of your expectations.
- Remind them of your rules. Just saying no is not enough. Younger children often



need reminders.

Tips for Setting Limits:

- Start with only a few rules. The more rules you have, the harder it will be for your grandchildren to remember them.
- Be sure you know why you are saying no. Explain your reasons for saying no. Be sure your grandchildren understand your reasons.
- Give kids a voice. Kids need a voice in setting limits. They need a chance to tell you what they think and feel. Even a child of 5 or 6 can talk with you and help you set fair limits. When kids help you make rules, they are more likely to obey them.
- Say what you mean. Be very clear about your limits.

Culture and Tradition

- Many grandparents have strong, traditional cultural ties to their heritage. They may find that even though their children were raised in a bicultural household, their grandchildren were not. Grandparents should be aware that their grandchildren's background may be different. They may not know about long-standing family cultures and traditions. For instance, grandparents may have a bilingual household, and the grandchildren have been mainstreamed into speaking only English.
- The hairstyles, dress and language of today's children and teenagers might try the patience of adults. It is important for grandparents to be sensitive to peer-pressure and to their grandchildren's need to look, dress and act like others their age.



Obtaining Documents & Financial Assistance

Obtaining Needed Papers and Documents

Tim didn't have any records for his granddaughter. The way things were going, he was surprised that Rebecca had shoes and clothes in her bag when his son so abruptly dropped her off. Tim knew his son who had been living on the streets for the past three months wouldn't have the child's birth certificate.

If you are raising a relative's child you will need to have certain papers and documents in order to apply for public assistance, medical services and school registration.

Birth Certificate

For a copy of a birth certificate, contact the public health department or courthouse in the state and county of your grandchild's birth. **In Illinois, only parents and guardians of children can obtain birth certificates.**

Attempt to get the

child's birth parents to obtain the birth certificate for you. If this is not possible, you will need to get an order from a judge giving you permission to obtain a birth certificate for your grandchild. This can be done through the guardianship process.

Once you have permission, you will need the following information:

- ❶ name of person for whom you are requesting the certificate
- ❷ date of birth
- ❸ place of birth: city, county and hospital
- ❹ parents' names as they appear on the birth certificate
- ❺ a day time phone number

There are fees for obtaining a birth certificate—check with the public health department or your local courthouse for all fees and forms of payment accepted.

If your grandchild was born in Illinois, contact the



Illinois Department of Public Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, 605 West Jefferson Street, Springfield, IL 62702-5097. The phone number is **217-782-6554**, TTY **1-800-547-0466**.

Social Security Card

If your grandchild does not have a Social Security card, or if it gets lost, you can apply for either new or replacement cards. **You do not have to be the children's legal guardian to obtain Social Security cards for them.** U.S. citizens need a copy of their birth certificate or baptismal record.



For information on obtaining a Social Security Card, phone the **Social Security Administration General Information line** at **1-800-772-1213**, or go in person to the **Social Security office**

Medical Records



If you have not raised your grandchild from birth, you may not have her or his medical records. Try to obtain all medical records from your grandchild's birth parents. If they do not have the records, ask them to sign a medical consent to have the records released (to the doctor or clinic who is now serving your grandchild). Also, your pediatrician's office or clinic may be able to help you in obtaining the

records - Ask them. If your grandchild has been enrolled in school, you may be able to obtain a copy of those medical records.

If you do not have prior medical records and your grandchild has a medical appointment, you may find it helpful to make a list of all illnesses and conditions you can remember your grandchild having. Include in this list information regarding the birth parents' medical history (if you know it), and any medical conditions or behavior during the mother's pregnancy. This can be helpful if doctors have to "reconstruct" your



Financial Assistance

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

- TANF provides financial assistance in the form of monthly cash assistance to help relatives that care for children who have been deprived of parental support. You do not have to be the guardian of the child to receive TANF. This assistance is referred to as a Child Only Grant.

- The child will automatically receive medical assistance.

- If you are a relative who works full-time, you can also receive child care with no co-payment. (You must receive cash assistance to qualify for child care).

- If the relative chooses not to apply for or receive the cash assistance, the child may still receive a medical card.

- You do not have to be the guardian of the child to

receive a Child Only Grant and the relative's income/assets are not counted in the child's eligibility.

- You should be aware that certain factors must be established to receive a TANF Child Only Grant.

For instance, you must:

- ❶ prove you are related to the child (through birth certificate and/or other legal documents);
- ❷ prove that the child is living with you;
- ❸ if the child was not born in the U.S., provide proof of the child's citizenship or immigration status;
- ❹ provide a Social Security number for each child applying for assistance;
- ❺ provide proof of health insurance, if the child has

insurance;

- ❻ provide information about the child's parents and cooperate in attempting to obtain child support from them; and
- ❼ provide proof of any income and/or assets the child has.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

(Source: Social Security Administration)

Social Security Income provides low income elderly, blind or disabled individuals, including children, with financial assistance in the form of monthly payments.

- If your grandchildren have a disability, they may qualify for assistance. Disabled means one has a physical or mental problem that keeps him or her from working and is expected to last at least a year or to result in death. When deciding if a



For further information on TANF or to find the DHS office nearest to you, contact the **Illinois Department of Human Services, (DHS)** at **1-800-252-8635**.

child is disabled, Social Security looks at how his or her disability affects everyday life.

- Parents or guardians can apply for blind or disabled children under 18.

You will need to provide the following information when applying SSI:

- ❶ your grandchildren's Social Security cards or records of their Social Security numbers;
- ❷ your grandchildren's birth certificates or other proofs of age;
- ❸ the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of doctors, hospitals, and clinics that have seen your grandchildren;
- ❹ and, your grandchildren's proofs of U.S. citizenship or eligible non-citizen status.



For more information or to apply for Supplemental Security Income, go to your **local Social Security office**, or call **1-800-772-1213**.

Earned Income Credit (EIC)

(Source: Internal Revenue Service)

- The EIC is a special benefit for low and moderate income working people who are raising children.
- The EIC program provides working grandparents who qualify with assistance by either (1) if you owe taxes—reducing the amount you owe or giving you money back; or (2) if you owe no taxes— giving you money back.
- The EIC is a tax credit program administered by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). You file for the EIC when you file your tax return.
- There are also Advance Earned Income Credit payments available that allow those who qualify to get part of their EIC in advance instead of waiting until after the end of the year. Check with the IRS for rules and regulations on the EIC program.



To obtain qualifying information on Earned Income Credit, contact the **Internal Revenue Service at 1-800-829-1040**. You may also contact the **AARP Grandparent Information Center at 1-202-434-2296** to request a copy of the *EIC Tax Package for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*.

Food Stamps

- Food Stamps are issued **monthly** (via a Link card) to qualifying families based on household size and income.

- The Department of Human Services uses current poverty level guidelines to assess eligibility.

- You will need to provide proof of your household income to the Department of Human Services when you apply for Food Stamps.

- Unlike TANF, the grandparents' income will be considered since the unit in food stamps is the group that eats together... not just the child.

For information and where to go to apply, call the



**Illinois
Department
of Human
Services,**

Food Stamp Program at

1-800-252-8635.

Child Support Payments

- Even though you may be taking care of your grandchildren in your home, the birth parents may be held financially responsible.

- Certain programs, such as TANF, require cooperation in attempting to collect child support



from birth
parents.

To get help
collecting

child support, establishing paternity or information on other Child Support Enforcement services, call the **Child Support Help Line** at **1-800-447-4278, TTY 1-800-526-5812**, Outside Illinois, call **217-785-1692.**

Tips on Dealing with Social Service Agencies:

- **Be patient.** You may encounter long waits on the phone or in person. Many agencies do not have the staff to take your calls immediately. You may call services that have automated answering systems or answering machines.

- **Call during low volume phone times.** Agencies differ by the volume and types of calls they receive. However, in doing research on programs for this guide, we found that it was often easier to get through to agency helplines during the early morning hours on Tuesday through Thursday. The busiest phone times appeared to be during lunch hours, 11:00-1:00, and on Mondays and Fridays.

- **Keep a log.** Always write down the name, title and number of the person to whom you speak. Record important details of your conversation for future reference.





Custody and Legal Issues

For many grandparents raising grandchildren, one of the most difficult challenges involves the court system. Legal representation can be expensive, emotionally draining and difficult to navigate. There are many options to consider when deciding what is best for you, your grandchild and the birth parents. Prior to making any decisions regarding custody, seek professional advice and review all your options. Avoid making hasty decisions during a crisis.

The following provides general descriptions of options:

Physical Custody

- Informal agreement in which grandparents are caring for grandchildren in their home without official or legal authority by a court.

- Grandparents have no formal rights or legal authority to make decisions regarding the child.

- Birth parents retain all rights and responsibilities of children.

Legal Custody

- A court order that grants custody of the grandchildren to the grandparents.
- Grandparents assume legal authority to make decisions.
- Birth parents remain financially responsible for the children.
- Even though the birth parents' do not have legal custody of the child, they may have the right to visitation.

Guardianship

- Guardianship is a legal arrangement in which an adult has the court-ordered authority and

responsibility to care for a child. In most counties you file for guardianship of a child in Probate Court.

- Guardianship may be necessary if a child's parents die, or if the child has been abandoned, is not receiving adequate care or is being abused in some way.

- Guardians of related children have the authority to:

- consent for medical treatment;
- handle school enrollment;
- obtain documents such as birth certificates;
- stop birth parents from taking the child out of their home without getting consent from the court.

- Under guardianship, rights of the birth parents are not severed. Birth parents retain the right to contest the guardian's power, to request regaining custody of the child, and to reasonable

visitation. Birth parents, if able, must contribute money to support the child.

- Once guardianship is ordered by the court, the child must live with the guardian. Guardianship can only be transferred back to the birth parents by the court.

Short - Term Guardianship

Short term guardianship is a legally recognized right of temporary guardianship that can last up to 60 days and be extended for 60 days after the original period. The document granting a short-term guardianship must be in writing. The form is included in the statute which complies with the legal requirements. Court approval is not necessary as long as the legal requirements are complied with. Both parents must sign the document unless certain conditions exist. The proposed guardian must also sign the document. The right of short-term guardianship begins and ends as specified in the document. This type of

guardianship can be revoked at any time and the birth parents do not relinquish any parental rights in respect to their children.

Kinship Foster Care

- Legal custody of the child resides with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The foster parents have only physical custody of the child. Kinship foster parents cannot make any major decisions regarding the care of the child without first obtaining consent of DCFS.

- Temporary or long term care that is provided by a grandparent or other relative to a child who has been removed from the home because of child abuse or neglect **(determination of abuse/neglect must be made by DCFS),**



For information on Kinship Foster Care, contact the **Department of Children Family Services, Foster Care Helpline**

voluntarily placed in foster care by the parent, or placed in foster care by a court.

- Kinship foster care payments may include money or assistance for food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, personal needs of the child, medical and dental care, social services and supportive services such as counseling.

- Kinship foster care parents must follow the rules and regulations regarding DCFS foster care placement.

Adoption

Formal legal agreement granted by the court which ends the legal relationship between a child and her or his birth parents.

Adoption permanently transfers all parental rights from the birth parents to the adoptive parents.

Unlike legal custody, adoption is permanent and cannot be modified if the

Subsidized Guardianship

(Excerpted from the Department of Children and Family Services' website)

- Subsidized guardianship is a new permanency option *only for children who are in kinship foster care.*

- Subsidized guardianship involves the transfer of legal responsibility for a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) ward to a private caregiver, such as a relative caregiver, who becomes the legal guardian of the child.

- To be eligible for this program, there are certain criteria that must be met. This includes:

- recommendation by the child's DCFS caseworker;
- the child must have been a ward of the State for two years or more prior to establishing subsidized guardianship, and resided with the prospective relative caregiver for at least one year;
- both reunification of the child with birth parent and adoption have been ruled out as a permanency goal

option;

- the child must have a strong bond with the caregiver, and the caregiver must have a strong commitment to the child; and
- the prospective guardian has no record of felony convictions.

- Subsidized guardianship does not involve termination of parental rights. Birth parents remain legally liable for the financial support of the child even though the decision-making authority of the child is granted to the guardian.

- Once guardianship is established, only the court would have authority to remove the child, and families would no longer require the intervention of DCFS.

For information on Private Subsidized Guardianship, call the **Department of Children and Family Services** at **1-312-814-8600**.



birth parent becomes able to care for the child.

Adoption Assistance for Special Needs Children

(Excerpted from Department of Children and Family Services website)

- Children who are wards of the state that have special needs, which make it highly unlikely that they can be adopted without adoption assistance, may be eligible for adoption

assistance.

- The factors or conditions which may be considered "special needs" include: ethnic background, age, membership in a sibling group, documented medical

conditions or physical, mental or emotional disabilities.

- According to the Department of Children and Family Services, eligible children may receive one or more of the following types of assistance:

- One time only payment for non-recurring adoption expenses.
- Payment, through issuance of a

Medicaid Card, for medical services which are not covered through public or private insurance or other public resources, and necessary counseling services for the adoptive family and child following the adoption.

- Monthly payment in an amount that is

determined for each child, based on the child's needs and the circumstances of the family.

- Conditional adoption assistance may be available for children who at the time of the adoption do not meet the eligibility criteria, but may be at risk for future physical, mental or emotional disability.



For general information on adoption, call the **Adoption Information Center of Illinois** at **1-800-572-2390**.

Outside Illinois, call **312-346-1516**.

When There are Problems with the Birth Parents...

Depending on the circumstances under which you became a grandparent caregiver, you may at some point encounter problems with your grandchildren's birth parents. If you have legal custody or guardianship of your grandchildren you may be able to obtain an Order of

Protection or an order limiting the birth parent to supervised visitation only.

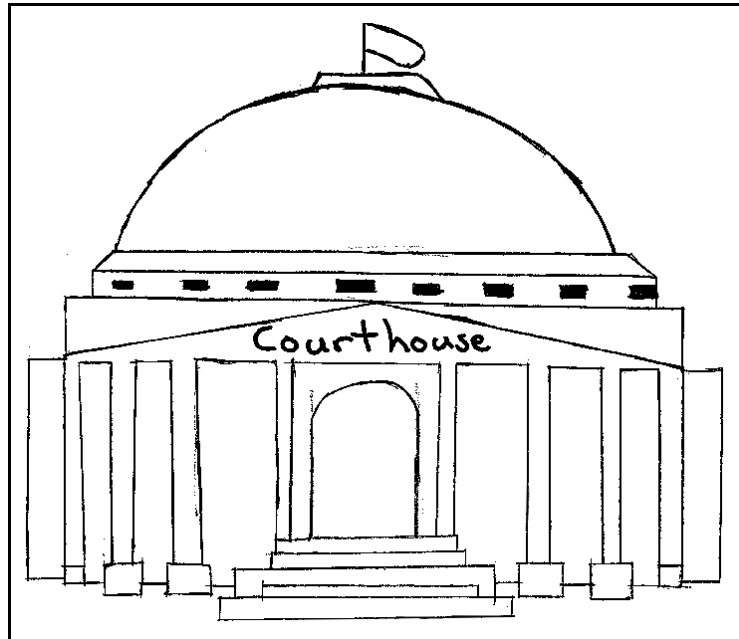
- **Order of protection.** This is an order issued by a judge that orders the parent to stay away from you, your grandchildren and your home. Failure to abide by a domestic violence order of

protection is cause for police arrest. You file for an order of protection at the office of the Circuit Clerk, Family Court Division in your county.

- **Supervised**

visitation. If you are worried about the safety of your grandchildren during visitation with birth parents, you may ask a judge to order that all visitation by your grandchildren and the birth parents be supervised.

Note: Both orders of protection and supervised visitation may be modified as situations change, or as the court determines.



Mediation

- Mediation is a form of dispute and conflict resolution that can be useful in cases where the parents and grandparents have trouble communicating with each other. For instance, a mediator such as a family therapist, may talk with family members individually or together to design a plan

for raising the child or establishing visitation.

- Mediators may be social workers who mediate between social service agencies and grandparents and/or parents to arrive at decisions that are in the best interest of the child.

- Some attorneys are also trained mediators.

- Mediation does not work in all cases. There is no one model for mediating. However, mediation is successfully being used in cases involving grandparents, grandchildren and birth parents to resolve conflict and aid in decision-making.

Negative Interactions with Birth Parents

(Source: *Grandparent Caregivers: A national guide* by Ginchild-Abeje and Perez-Porter)

There may be occasions where the parents are not in a stable living situation or are participating in activities that you think could have negative effects on your grandchild during visitation. If this is the case, you may want to consider the following suggestions:

- Ask the parents to schedule the visits for a particular time so you have time to prepare the children.
- Ask other cooperative relatives to be present for the visit.
- You could ask the court to limit the parents' contact with the children at the time that the guardianship and/or legal

custody order is issued (if there are problems with visits or phone calls).

- If there is a previous visitation order, you can file a motion to modify that order if problems with an uncooperative parents persist. However, the parent can also file a motion to change the original order.

- If there is a real risk that the parents may endanger the children—that is, if parents have, in the past, left them alone or with an irresponsible person, taken them

someplace dangerous or physically abused them, then visits should take place under the supervision of the guardian or a mutually agreed upon person. If the parents do not agree to this, you may have to ask the court to resolve this matter.

- Do not degrade the grandchildren's birth parents in front of them—talk to other adults, such as those in a support group, instead. You can let your grandchildren know that you can be angry and upset with someone's behavior and still love and care about them.

Factors to Consider in Determining What are Reasonable Expectations for Visitation:

- The parent should be sober for the visit.
- The visitation schedule should take into account the child's bedtime, regularly scheduled activities and school. It should also accommodate the parent's schedule including work, counseling, mandatory programs, and available free time if in a work release program.



For information on statewide legal aid services, call the **Illinois Department on Aging's Senior HelpLine** at **1-800-252-8966 (Voice and TTY).**

Why should I establish Paternity?

Emotional and financial support from both parents gives a child the foundation for a good life. Your grandchild is entitled to financial support from the father when legal paternity has been established. Illinois law now allows unmarried parents to establish legal paternity for their baby without having to go to court and often before the mother and child leave the hospital.

What's the best gift I can give my grandchildren?

Every baby has a father, but not every father is a legal father. Many teen mothers are not married, so the father has no legal tie to the child. A father who is not married to the mother becomes a legal father by establishing paternity. Your grandchild needs a legal father. Here are the reasons why:

- Your grandchild has a right to know his or her father and mother, and to be loved by both as well as by all of his grandparents.
- Your grandchild can get child support money when legal paternity has been established.
- Your grandchild may need medical information and medical history from the father's family to have a better chance at a healthy life.
- It will be possible for your grandchild to claim Social Security benefits, pensions, veterans' benefits, life insurance or inheritance rights if paternity has been established.
- If you are the paternal grandparent, paternity must be established before you can apply for a Child Only Grant.

Even if your grandchild's father is now in school or unemployed, he may have a good job someday and be better able to provide for his child. Only parents can establish paternity, but as a grandparent you can help by making sure your daughter or son understand the rights and responsibilities parents have and the benefits they will give your grandchild by establishing paternity. If your grandchild's paternity is already established, it will be easier for you to collect child support for your grandchild from either or both parents.

The Law Protects Children

Under Illinois law, the father has responsibilities for his children whether or not he's married, no matter how old he is. In fact, the Illinois Department of Public Aid's, Division of Child Support Enforcement will try to locate the father even if he has left the state. The Department can require the father to take genetic blood test to determine paternity of the child.

The
father
can



For information on establishing paternity, call the **Child Support Helpline at 1-800-447-4278 (TTY) 1-800-526-5812.**



Coping Strategies

One of the best ways you can help yourself and your grandchildren through tough times is to take care of yourself, both physically and mentally. You know the drill: eat right, get plenty of rest and regular exercise, and see your doctor regularly. Talk to your doctor about any physical, mental or emotional problems you are experiencing.

Grandparent Support Groups

Rosemarie was nervous about going to her grandparent support group meeting. Shy at first about speaking up in the group, she just sat and listened. Within the first five minutes she began to hear that others were in similar situations. Finally, she had found a place where people understood what she was going through.

The number of support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren is increasing in Illinois. Many of them offer child care so that both grandparents and their grandchildren have a chance to socialize. For many grandparents, support groups such as these offer the only respite from their child care duties.

How Support Groups Can Help:

- Offer emotional support to grandparents who feel alone and isolated.
- Create a network of grandparents who are in caregiving situations.
- Offer guidance, assistance and advice to grandparents in their efforts to care for their grandchildren.
- Give grandparents

ideas on formulating positive solutions to difficult and challenging problems.

- Serve as a clearinghouse for resources and information.

- Offer a safe, understanding place for grandparents to discuss (and blow off steam) the emotional ups and downs of raising their grandchildren.

- Provide tools for advocacy and awareness of the issues facing grandparents raising grandchildren.

If there is not already an established grandparent support group in your area, you may want to consider

Tips for Organizing a Grandparent Support Group

organizing one.

The following tips may help you get started:

- Learn from others. Contact established support groups in other cities and ask for advice in starting a support group. The Senior HelpLine can help you locate existing support groups in the Illinois.

- Contact professionals in the community—ask for help from family counselors, therapists, local health associations, hospitals, social service agencies, etc. in getting a support group started. If any of the people you contact has expertise in

issues facing grandparents raising grandchildren, ask if they would be willing to facilitate group meetings or serve as special speakers once the group is formed.

- Find a location for meetings. Churches, hospitals, non-profit organizations, schools and libraries may have facilities that the group could use at little or no charge. The facility will need to have a separate room for child care. Explain the importance of support groups. Do not be bashful about asking for free space.

- Hold an organizational meeting—enlist the help of other

grandparents, service providers and others interested in grandparents raising grandchildren issues.

- Be patient in your attempts to organize a support group. Planning and organizing a group takes time, effort and lots of perseverance. Remember: the benefits of the group will make all your time and effort worthwhile.



For more information on Grandparent Raising Grandchildren Support Groups, Call the **Senior HelpLine** at **1-800-252-8966**. For general information, call **AARP Grandparent Information Center** at **1-202-434-2296**. **The Illinois Task Force on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren- The Task Force is comprised of 75 members from various state agencies, associations, support group facilitators, not-for-profit agencies and grandparents who advocate for relative caregivers. For more information, please contact the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966.**

Taking Care of Yourself

It had been months since Andrea had seen her other grandchildren. She seemed to be spending all her time parenting her son's children these days, and she felt guilty for not having the time or energy to visit with her other grandchildren. She knew it would be a needed relief to be able to be just a "grandparent" for a day with the other children.

Stress Reducing Suggestions for Grandparent Caregivers

(Prepared by the University of Illinois Extension Educators for the Illinois Task Force on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Tip Sheet)

- 1.** Keep up your own health.
- 2.** Walk or exercise regularly.
- 3.** Insist on a regular quiet hour.
- 4.** Take time for yourself.
- 5.** Do something you enjoy.
- 6.** Discuss your problems with friends, other grandparents, or a family counselor.

7. Consider your religious community and personal faith for strength and assistance.

8. Concentrate on the task at hand. Don't dwell on the past. Looking too far ahead can also be overwhelming. If you can't take it a day at a time, try to accomplish one thing at a time.

9. Learn to say no.

10. Practice patience. Let those you are caring for do as much for themselves as possible.

11. Set limits with grandchildren and stick to them.

12. Focus on the positive and keep your sense of humor.

13. Let yourself off the hook. Your adult child's circumstances are not your fault.

14. Accept reality. See things as they are and not how you wish them to be.

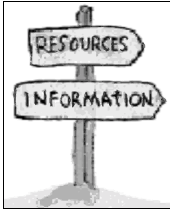
15. Eliminate hurtful thoughts and self-pity. These negative emotions only drag you down.

16. Reward yourself. Even small rewards will help your emotional well-being.

17. Avoid isolation. Make an effort to maintain friendships, even if it is only by telephone for now.

18. Join a support group. This is an excellent place to get information, ideas and emotional support.

19. Look into parenting classes to learn new methods for helping children develop self-esteem, confidence, accountability and responsibility.



Resources for Grandparent Caregivers

Illinois Task Force on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

c/o Illinois Department
on Aging
421 E. Capitol, #100
Springfield, IL 62701-1789
SENIOR HELPLINE,
1-800-252-8966
(Voice and TTY)

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) NAMI is a national network of families working to improve the lives of children and adolescents affected by neurological brain disorders such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Tourette's syndrome, Asperger's syndrome, depression, anxiety, panic disorder, bipolar, schizophrenia, and obsessive /compulsive disorder **NAMI Helpline**
1-800-346-4542

AARP Grandparent Information Center

601 E. Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20049
(202) 434-2296

National Coalition of Grandparents and Grandparent's United for Children's Rights

137 Larkin Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53705
(608) 238-8751

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

3851 Centraloma Drive
San Diego, California 92107

Raising Our Children's Kids: An Intergenerational Network of Grandparent, Inc. (ROCKING)

Illinois Area Agencies on Aging

AREA 1

Northwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging

Janet B. Ellis, Executive Director
2576 Charles Street
Rockford, IL 61108-1605
815/226-4901
FAX: 815/226-8984;
1-800-542-8402 (nine county area ONLY)
815/226-1954 (TTY)
Web: www.nwilaaa.org
E-Mail: niaaaa@nwilaaa.org

AREA 2

Northeastern Illinois Area Agency on Aging

Charles D. Johnson, Executive Director
Mailing Address:

P. O. Box 809
Kankakee, IL 60901-0809

Non-U.S. Post Office deliveries:

Kankakee Community College
River Road, West Campus - Building 5
Kankakee, IL 60901
815/939-0727
FAX: 815/939-0022

Field Office:

245 West Roosevelt Road
Building No. 6, Suites 41-43
West Chicago, IL 60185
630/293-5990
FAX: 630/293-7488
1-800-528-2000
(calls will be directed to proper source)

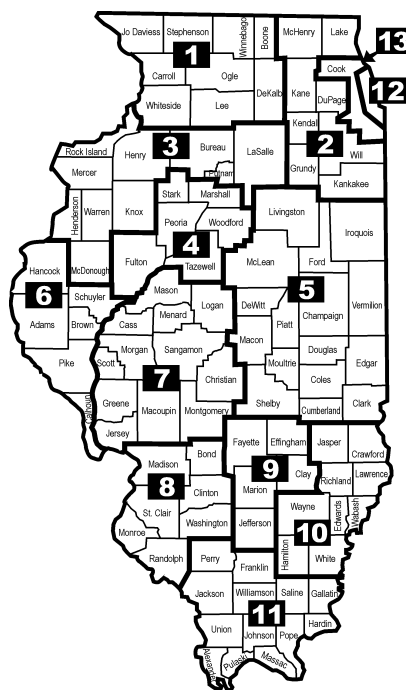
Web: www.ageguide.org

E-Mail: neilaaoa@keynet.net

AREA 3

Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging

Greta Brooks, Executive Director
729 - 34th Avenue
Rock Island, IL 61201-5950
309/793-6800
FAX: 309/793-6807
1-800-322-1051 (I & A)
Web: www.wiaaaa.org
E-Mail: greta@wiaaaa.org



AREA 4

Central Illinois Agency on Aging, Inc.

Joanne Thomas, Executive Director
700 Hamilton Boulevard, Room 300
Peoria, IL 61603-3617
309/674-2071
FAX: 309/674-3639
1-877-777-2422
309/674-1831 (TTY)
Web: n/a
E-Mail: brenda@ciaoa.com

AREA 5

East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging, Inc.

Michael J. O'Donnell, Executive Director
1003 Maple Hill Road
Bloomington, IL 61704-9327
309/829-2065
FAX: 309/829-6021;
1-800-888-4456 (I & A)
(sixteen county area ONLY)
Web: www.eciaaaa.org
E-Mail: aginginfo@eciaaaa.org

AREA 6

**West Central Illinois
Area Agency on Aging**

Lynn Niewohner, Director

Mailing Address:

P. O. Box 428
Quincy, IL 62306-0428

Non-U.S. Post Office deliveries:

639 York Street, Rm. 205
Quincy, IL 62301
217/223-7904
FAX: 217/222-1220;
1-800-252-9027 (I & A) (Voice & TTY)

Web: n/a

E-Mail: wciaaaa@ksni.net

AREA 7

**Project LIFE Area Agency
on Aging, Inc.**

Julie Hubbard, Executive Director
2141 West White Oaks Drive, Suite C
Springfield, IL 62704-6495
217/787-9234 (Voice & TTY)
FAX: 217/787-6290
1-800-252-2918 (I & A)
(217, 309 & 618 area codes ONLY)
Web: www.seniorsprojectlife.org
E-Mail: plaaaa@springnet1.com

AREA 8

**Southwestern Illinois
Area Agency on Aging**

Joy Paeth, Chief Executive Officer
2365 Country Road
Belleville, IL 62221-2571
618/222-2561
FAX: 618/222-2567
1-800-326-3221
Web: www.swiaaaa.org
E-Mail: agingagy@swiaaaa.org

AREA 09

Midland Area Agency on Aging

Deborah M. Kuiken, Executive Director

Mailing Address:

P. O. Box 1420
Centralia, IL 62801-1420

Non-U.S. Post Office deliveries:

434 South Poplar
Centralia, IL 62801-1420
618/532-1853
FAX: 618/532-5259

1-877-532-1853

Web: www.midlandaaa.org

E-Mail: maaa09@aol.com

AREA 10

**Southeastern Illinois
Area Agency on Aging, Inc.**

Yvonne Hutchings, Executive Director
516 Market Street
Mt. Carmel, IL 62863-1558
618/262-2306
FAX: 618/262-4967
1-800-635-8544
(618 area code ONLY)
Web: n/a
E-Mail: seiaaaa@wworld.com

AREA 11

Egyptian Area Agency on Aging, Inc.

John M. Smith, Executive Director
200 East Plaza Drive
Carterville, IL 62918-1982
618/985-8311
FAX: 618/985-8315;
1-888-895-3306
Web: www.egyptianaaa.org
E-Mail: egyptianaaa@starband.net

AREA 12

Chicago Department on Aging

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30 North LaSalle, Suite 2320
Chicago, IL 60602-2586
312/744-4016
FAX: 312/744-0680;
312/744-6777 (TTY)
Web: www.cityofchicago.org/Aging
E-Mail: aging@cityofchicago.org

AREA 13

Suburban Area Agency on Aging

Jonathan Lavin, Executive Director
1146 Westgate, Suite 200
Oak Park, IL 60301-1054
708/383-0258
FAX: 708/524-0870
708/524-1653 (TTY)
1-800-699-9043 (Suburban Cook County area ONLY)
Web: www.suburban-age.org
E-Mail: information@s3a.com

Numbers to Know:



Illinois Department on Aging, Senior HelpLine

1-800-252-8966 (Voice & TTY)

Legal Assistance / Document Requests / Financial Support

Illinois Department of Public Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics (birth certificates)

1-217-782-6554

Illinois Department Of Revenue, Circuit Breaker Program

1-800-624-2459

1-800-544-5304 (TTY)

Illinois Department of Revenue, Taxpayer Service

1-800-829-1040

Social Security Administration

1-800-772-1213

Child Support Helpline

1-800-447-4278

1-800-526-5812 (TTY)

Child Support Helpline

(outside Illinois)

1-217-785-1692

Foster Care Helpline

1-800-624-KIDS

Adoption Information Center of Illinois

1-800-572-2390

Adoption Information Center

(outside Illinois)

1-312-346-1516

Land of Lincoln

Legal Assistance Foundation

1-800-252-8629 (select counties)

Prairie State Legal Services, Inc.

1-800-892-2985 (select counties)

1-815-965-5114 (TTY)

Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago

1-312-341-1070

1-312-431-1206 (TTY)

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

1-800-323-GROW

KidCare Program

1-866-468-7543

Illinois Department of Child and Family Services

1-217-524-2029

Illinois Pro Bono Center (legal assistance)

1-217-359-6811

Support / Assistance

Illinois Department on Aging Senior HelpLine

1-800-252-8966 (Voice & TTY)

National Coalition of Grandparents and Grandparent's United for Children's Rights

1-608-238-8751

AARP Grandparent Information Center

1-202-434-2296

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill

1-800-346-4572

Early Intervention Connections

1-888-217-3505

Parent Help Line

1-888-727-5889

Depression Awareness

1-800-421-4211

KIDS Peace Hotline

1-800-421-0353

Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-25-ABUSE

Medical / Nutrition

Illinois Department of Public Health (WIC/Kidcare)

1-800-323-4769

Illinois Department of Human Services (medical card)

1-800-359-2163

Illinois Hunger Coalition

1-800-359-2163

Acknowledgments

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(Voice and TTY)

Starting Points

for Grandparents
Raising Grandchildren

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